41: Ewers

NF6 Blackfoot NF6

462
562
834

[For information on male-female differences in painting styles, see Categories 531 and 532, pp. 15-B--16-A, 19-B--20-B.]

595 585 quent marriages, if the man had proved a good, kind husband to his first wife, other men, who thought a good deal of their daughters, might propose to give them to him, so that they would be well treated. The man sent over the horses to the new father-in-law's lodge, and the girl returned to his, bringing her things with her. Or if the man saw a girl he liked, he would propose for her to her father.

834 [584] [171] Among the Blackfeet, there was apparently no form of courtship, such as prevails among our southern Indians. Young men seldom spoke to young girls who were not relations, and the girls were carefully guarded. They never went out of the lodge after dark, and never went out during the day, except with the mother or some other old woman.

584 [593] [762] The girl, therefore, had very little choice in the selection of a husband. If a girl was told she must marry a certain man, she had to obey. She might cry, but her father's will was law, and she might be beaten or even killed by him, if she did not do as she was ordered. As a consequence of this severity, suicide was quite common among the Blackfoot girls. A girl ordered to marry a man whom she did not like would often watch her chance, and go out in the brush and hang herself. The girl who could not marry the man she wanted to was likely to do the same thing.

593 [684] [759] The man had absolute power over his wife. Her life was in his hands, and if he had made a payment for her, he could do with her about as he pleased. On the whole, however, women who behaved themselves were well treated and received a good deal of consideration. Those who were light-headed, or foolish, or obstinate and stubborn were sometimes badly beaten. Those who were unfaithful to their husbands usually had their noses or ears, or both, cut off for the first offence, and were killed either by the husband or some relation, or by the *I-kun-uh'-kah-tsi* for the second. Many of the doctors of the highest reputation in the tribe were women.

11: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

554 556 frequently . . . they [the young men] are great drones, lounging in the village, participating neither in the war nor the chase. . . ."[47] Obviously, these "drones" trusted to their fathers' wealth to bring them positions of re- [157] [622] spect—and this trust was not misplaced. Bravery and war deeds remained an asset to leadership, but among the Blackfoot, "great deeds in social and ceremonial life would alone elevate one to the status of headman."[48]

556 555 Blackfoot society offered considerable opportunity for vertical mobility. Disease, accidents of climate, misfortunes of gambling might reduce and, at times, even wipe out large herds, but the mere fact that great numbers of horses could be accumulated and held for a considerable period led to certain advantage. Manipulation through purchase, give-aways, and other forms of ostentatious display in no way destroyed this advantage. Shrewdly exercised, they built up great prestige and reliable support.[49]

Rivalry and Violence

578 182 621 Cooperative mechanisms, emphasizing interpersonal responsibilities both within the family and within the larger social group (band and men's societies) counteracted to some degree the competitive trends, but these trends continued nevertheless to dominate Blackfoot life. Rivalry for recognition and power was so keen that it "often led to assassination and 621 other dark deeds."[50] As early as 1808, Alexander Henry notes with consider- 578 able feeling the difficulties of the traders in dealing with the Blackfoot, but 181 he leaves no doubt that within the tribes, Blackfoot behavior was equally unpredictable and destructive to peaceful relations. Regarding the Piegan, [834] he wrote:

[837]

> They have frequent quarrels which may end in bloodshed or death; for though they are lavish in offering their women to the whites. . .they are exceedingly jealous among themselves. These quarrels, however, seldom last long, nor do they affect the whole tribe; the woman being killed, reconciliation is immediate and all are friends again.[51]

Other Blackfoot tribes were certainly no better:

> The Cold Band are notoriously a set of audacious villains. The Blood are still worse, always inclined to mischief and murder.[52]

---

[47] Bradley, *Characteristics*, p. 272. Bradley commenced writing down his impressions in 1871 when he was stationed at frontier army posts, most particularly Fort Benton and Fort Shaw, and continued to do so until his death in 1877. (*Ibid.*, p. 7.)

[48] Wissler, *Social Life*, p. 23. It is possible that this was a development of the late buffalo period.

[49] *Idem.*

[50] *Idem.*

[51] Alexander Henry and David Thompson, *Journals*, Vol. 2, p. 723. Cf. also Maximilian, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

[52] Henry and Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 530.

18: Wissler E-5 (1903-1912) 1913
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

535 lasting until daybreak. Sometimes people are invited to attend the dance,
272 and at others they simply come together of their own accord.
[533] There are special songs for the dance and drums are used. The dancers
[534] rise and dance in place, beating time on a dipper of tea while dancing.

The Night Singers.

533 It is an old custom among the Blackfoot for parties of young people to
883 ride about the camp at night, singing. That this is a distinct thing is evident
[492] since there is a distinct series of songs used only on such occasions. At such times they often ride double, that is two men on a single horse, or often a man and a woman. Mr. Duvall writes as follows:—

[625] These young men sometimes ride around all night and sing. Formerly, it was done to guard the camp and protect the horses from being stolen by the enemy. The singers usually go around the outer edge of the camp, making many rounds. There are usually three or four groups with three or four men in each group. Sometimes women assist the night singers.

[834] The night singers do not necessarily have to belong to any society but anyone may join them. This custom is kept up nowadays only during the sun dance. It is not understood as good form for the women or girls to go out with the night singers. Although a great many of the grass dance songs are sung, there are special songs also. The singing is usually continued until daylight. At the end of each song they usually shout and keep time with sleigh bells when singing. They are never ordered to sing at the present time.

The Begging Dance.

535 The Piegan name for this dance is "those that dance around camp for a
276 smoke." The members do not belong to a society, but a number of men,
[533] six or twelve, or sometimes more, go to some tipi and sing and shake their
[534] bells. This may be done at any time of the night. The owner of the tipi
[431] fills a pipe and lets them smoke, gives them some food, a blanket, clothing, a horse, or money. The presents are divided up among the men. The owner of the tipi seldom knows who the men are. They repeat this at four tipis and then disband. Several groups of these men may go around at the
[556] same time, but they never stop at the same tipi. Usually, the men stop at the tipi of a chief or head man as they are more sure of getting a smoke, for it adds to one's prestige to be generous with presents, feasts, etc.

[pp 461-986 not processed]

829 back up what you say with your initiations. The leaders of the tribe always went through most of the transfer and took care of the main bundles. I have the rights to a lot of things that I don't even speak up about, because I don't want to make things too complicated. But we have to stick by the wisdom of our ancestors, and not try to outsmart them in talking about the Creator, and all that is created.

584 I started to like Mokakin when I was at the boarding school—St. Paul's, here on the reserve. That's back in the days when we lived at the school practically all year. We grew up there, my sister and I. My father was planning to choose a husband for me when I came out of school. He wanted someone from a wealthy family, someone that would go through a lot of transfers and take good care of his family that way. I wanted to marry Mokakin, so one day he came for me on horseback. I ran away from the school and eloped with him. In those times fathers still chose husbands for their daughters.

[178] Today, the young people do not even ask their parents for advice about marriage. They just look for each other, even
834 while they are young, still. When we were young, we would always be kept just with other girls. Our mothers and aunts and relatives watched us very close. They didn't allow even one boy to hang around. We didn't know how it was to just be walking around outside by ourselves. A soon as it was dark we had to be inside the house. This was especially true at the Sun
[178] Dance camps. Nowadays the kids just run wild there, day and
[829] night. I tell you it was much better when life was strict.

583 Back at the school they talked about putting Mokakin in jail for taking me away with him. He was older than I was. But I wasn't young anymore, either. I was already planning to leave school, and my father was already looking around for a son-in-law. But he didn't want Mokakin, so I just took off with him. After that he had to accept him, since I was his Minipoka, his special child.

functions only among the Bloods. Every year, during the Sun Dance encampment, the members of the group put up a special lodge inside the camp circle. For four days they have their meetings and religious ceremonies, most of which are private. Men take part during only certain of these ceremonies, especially the public dances, when four men with rattles sing the dance songs. The members wear ancient headdresses that they keep inside their medicine bundles throughout most of the year. These, and the Natoas used in the Sun Dance, are the only medicine bundles belonging specifically to women, and they are very highly regarded by all the tribe.

When the days of war parties and scalp-taking ended, in the later eighteen hundreds, the old Scalp Dance evolved into a social dance known as the Circle Dance, or the Long-Tail Dance. It was a slow dance in which the people joined hands and arms and moved sideways in large circles. Men, women, and children all took part, but from looking at old photos it seems that the dancers were most often rows of women. This dance is still performed, though at a slightly quicker pace, under the current name of Round Dance. It is the native version of a "slow dance," and is often requested when the fast dancers are about worn out.

Another popular dance for both men and women is called the Owl Dance. It has a lively hard-soft drumbeat to which the people generally dance in couples, following each other in a circling or waving line around the dance floor. Some fancy-dressed men follow this dance alone, while others follow with a woman in each arm. Even the elders seem to enjoy this dance a lot, although when they were young tribal customs frowned on the public display of intimacy necessary to do it properly. Like most of the new Indian-style dances done by the Bloods, this one was introduced from other tribes.

Dances have always been important in the courting life of my grandmothers. They were among the few occasions in the past when young men and young women were allowed to be

[i.e., of the women's society, Motokiks--Analyst]

20: Hungry Wolf I-4,5 (no date) 1980
NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

291 [53] symbolizing their war exploits, and religious powers. Everyday robes, however, were left plain, except that they were trimmed for the wearer's size.

[177] Beef hides did not replace buffalo as robes. Instead, the people turned to wool blankets and shawls given out by the government or obtained in trade. Those with bright designs were preferred, like those that came from the Pendleton Woolen Mills in Oregon. In Canada the Hudson's Bay Company introduced blankets with colored stripes that also became very popular. Elk-hide robes were still common in the [292] nineteen twenties, as seen in dance photos of that period, and they are today still part of the holy woman's outfit during the Sun Dance.

291 ●834 My grandmothers have long been known for being very modest about themselves. Some of this modesty no doubt stems from our tribal emphasis on virtuousness, while much of it must come from the missionaries and others who began to affect our social ways after 1800. Anthropological evidence and notes from journals written before 1800 indicate that the women of the earlier times were not always fully covered, especially from the waist up, and this was common among many other tribes as well. In fact, women of some Southern Plains tribes wore only skirts during the summertime until the end of the nineteenth century.

515 My grandmothers kept themselves clean, as well as neatly dressed, according to early writings and stories that have been passed on. During warm weather they generally bathed each day in a part of the nearby lake or stream that was set aside for their privacy. Usually they waited until their morning [296] work was done and most of the men were gone hunting. While they had their dresses off they usually cleaned them using cakes of white clay and scraping them with rough pieces of stone. Usually they washed their hair at the same time, just with cold water, though sometimes they washed it by their lodge with a special brew of herbs and scents if they wanted